

~~CHRIST~~ ANSWERS YOUTH'S PROBLEMS

## PREFACE

I have often found that the most interesting and profitable method of Bible Study is to make clear to oneself the problems on which one seeks light and to study the Bible, especially the Gospels, with a view to finding out what is said there in answer to these problems. Youth today are perplexed about many important difficulties and questions. They would do well to study the Gospels afresh in order to discover what Jesus has to say about such problems. This little book is an attempt to help youth to do it for themselves, whether as individuals or in study groups.

I have written it in response to an invitation from Mr. J. S. Aiman, General Secretary of the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of India, Burma and Ceylon. He is anxious that the different associations should engage in serious Bible study and that material should be prepared for this purpose. He has pressed me to complete the task urgently. The different topics in the book have been suggested by him.

On each topic I have brought together the important passages from the Gospels and have added a few comments of my own. The student should work through the chapter taking time to look up and read through each Scripture reference and meditate on it. He would do well to hunt up, with the help of the marginal references in the Bible, other passages of

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# Christ Answers Youth's Problems

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## I. CHRIST AND FORGIVENESS

In this booklet we are dealing briefly with some of the problems which urgently press upon the youth of the day. We may wonder whether the problem of forgiveness is of sufficient importance to be included among the most important questions which trouble modern youth. We may also wonder whether the problem is peculiarly a problem of youth. Youth is the period of lofty idealism and it may be supposed that resentment and anger and bitterness belong more to the periods of middle age and of old age rather than of youth.

In studying the teaching of Jesus we are impressed by the great importance which He attaches to the need for the forgiveness of our fellowmen when they offend against us (Matt. 5: 23, 24). Prayer is the supreme act of the religious life. Jesus here declares that prayer becomes ineffective if any grievance is nursed or resentment entertained during the time of prayer. This shows clearly the tremendous significance which Jesus attaches to the need for forgiveness. Unless a man fully forgives his brother his prayer will not be heard. Before proceeding with prayer it is absolutely necessary to clear the mind of all resentment and anger. The importance of forgiveness in the teaching

is not merely a personal duty but must also be exercised in our larger relations with our fellowmen. This has some bearing on such questions as prison reform and capital punishment. The old idea of the best way to deal with the criminal was to deal with him so severely that he would not repeat his offence. Various stern disciplines in prisons were devised in order to impress upon criminals the gravity of their offence. But it has been found in the course of experience that penalties, however severe, do not necessarily make a man better. The idea these days is to help the criminal to a better mode of life, not so much by punishing him severely as by giving him a different outlook upon life and teaching him an honest trade. Society need not segregate the criminal and deal with him as an outcaste, simply because he has strayed from the right path. His offence may be a really serious one, but no vengeance should be visited on him ; on the other hand, after a patient and loving understanding of his difficulties and needs he should be dealt with sympathetically and led on to the right path. Many thinking persons are coming to the conclusion that for the same reasons capital punishment is neither necessary nor wise. There may be more than one opinion about the proposal to abolish capital punishment, but the proposal itself is significant of the age and shows the wide ramifications of the problem of forgiveness on the organised life of Society.

Forgiveness has also an important bearing on international relationships. At the end of the Great War (1914-1918) the Allies dealt with Germany with the utmost rigour, and thought that by crushing so effect-

crucified, a form of punishment reserved for the worst criminals. It was while still undergoing the utmost shame and agony on the Cross that Jesus forgave His enemies and asked God also to forgive them. Time is often said to heal many wounds. After the lapse of some months or years people generally find it easy to forgive. In this case it was during the hour of the greatest suffering caused by His enemies that Jesus forgave them.

People sometimes say that they have forgiven several times already, but that the offence has been repeated so often that it becomes impossible to forgive any more. The teaching of Jesus on this point is quite clear (Matt. 18: 21, 22). We should forgive our brother not only seven times, but also seventy times seven, because God forgives us continually our innumerable sins and failures. When we say that others err so often against us that the limit of our patience is reached, we should remember how often and how terribly we sin against God. Compared with our own offences against God the offences of other people against us are slight. There is no such thing as exhausting all the possibilities of Christian forgiveness.

Many people often say that they do not personally feel any resentment or anger, but that they would like to teach the offender a real lesson. They are only interested in making a better man of the one who has committed the wrong, and not in taking vengeance on him. Is it more effective to punish than to forgive? The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32) shows that forgiveness, human as well as divine, is

Forgiveness must be complete and whole-hearted (Matt. 18: 35). A journalist suggests<sup>1</sup> that one way to bring about better relations with Germany is for the Prime Minister of England to declare publicly that the guilt of the Great War should not be attached to Germany. The writer goes on, however, to say that this public declaration will have excellent effects only if at the same time England is well-prepared for air defence. This is not Christ's method, whatever else it may be.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Are young people disturbed by resentments and jealousies as much as older people?

2. Do you know personally of men whose Christian lives have taken a new meaning after the exercise of forgiveness?

3. Does it always help to tell people what we have done against them or are there some instances in which such knowledge is best hidden?

4. Can there be real forgiveness unless there is restitution? Is restitution always possible? If restitution is not possible can forgiveness be still genuine?

5. In modern methods of education punishment is discouraged. Does this make the children better or worse?

6. Is the reform of prison methods necessary? Are there more or less criminals today than before because Society no longer deals with them severely?

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In Memory of During Life Time

1. This was written in 1939.

## 2. CHRIST AND NON-VIOLENCE

In view of the present chaotic condition of the world, with its wars and rumours of wars, it is necessary to study carefully the teaching and practice of Jesus with regard to the question of non-violence.

Jesus teaches explicitly and clearly that one's enemies should be loved and that evil should not be resisted by violence (Matt. 5: 38-48. Luke 6: 27-38).

Buddha taught in India:

Let one conquer wrath by meekness.

Let one conquer wrong by goodness.

Let one conquer the mean man by a gift

And a liar by the truth.

A Christian's love should extend to every one, not merely to those who love him. Even if others illtreat us we should not retaliate. It may be asked whether Jesus laid down this principle of love only in the realm of personal relationships, or whether He meant that it should be carried out in the realm of national and international relationships also. No doubt Christ actually laid down this principle to guide us in the matter of personal relationships. But the principle itself is so clear and so sound that we should be quite justified in extending it to the wider region of international relationships. It would be quite in keeping with the spirit of the life and teaching of Christ to say that no nation<sup>a</sup>



deeply, but He did not let His love for them stand in the way of His exposing their weakness. (Matt. 23: 13-33). We may also say that He practised violence of speech against those who desecrated the Temple of God (Mark 11: 15-18). He was attached to the Temple. When people converted it into a market place and practised doubtful methods of business in it, He was greatly upset and He drove them out. Though Christ practised non-violence as far as He was personally concerned, any wrong that was done to God or God's house or religion stirred up His anger mightily.

The teaching of Jesus on this subject may now be applied to modern conditions. Every Christian should practise non-violence in his personal dealings. If a man insults me or injures me, however terrible the injury, it is my duty not to retaliate in any way. Quarrels often begin in a small way. A harsh word is spoken without premeditation. There is at once retaliation with a volley of bitter and cruel words. Heated talk leads to blows, which may end even in murder. If the person insulted remembers the teaching of Christ and keeps his peace, all this can be avoided. It is remarkable how much unpleasantness and wrangling can be stopped by the exercise of patience and forbearance. Christ wants us not only to refrain from retaliating but to love our enemy actively. Such love, wherever it is found, works wonders.

The Christian duty of love in the larger sphere of international relationship is now engaging the attention of youth all over the world. War under modern conditions brings about destruction on a vast scale. Even our imagination reels when we try to grasp the awful

the wide implications of the Christian duty of non-violence, is Mahatma Gandhi, who is not himself an avowed follower of Christ. The fact is, the emphasis on gentleness, peace, love and forbearance which has been characteristic of Indian religious life through the ages is closely akin to Christ's teaching about loving one's enemies. The Indian temperament has constantly been trained along these virtues and is more ready to accept fully the implications of Christ's teaching than the aggressive Western temperament. It is therefore possible for Mahatma Gandhi to preach to the world the need for the complete practice of non-violence under all circumstances and conditions. Here he is interpreting correctly the spirit of Christ's teaching and applying it to modern conditions.

The only way in which the world can be saved is by people following literally Christ's teaching in international relationships. We should have to travel a long way before this becomes possible. But this is the ideal for which we should strive. We should all be ready, under whatever circumstances, to give up fighting and to practise non-violence. We should win the enemy not by force but by love. The conqueror himself is vanquished by a new might, the might of love. It is indeed a hopeful sign that, all over the world, thoughtful men and women are reaching the conviction that Christ teaches us not to fight under any circumstances. This conviction is gradually spreading. It would take much sacrifice and much suffering to carry out this conviction in the realm of political dealings. The way of the Cross should be followed if we are to reach a solution of the world's difficulties. Christ Himself

5. If a strong man is attacked and his death means the death of several weak people associated with him, should he defend himself using violence in the process?

6. Is it possible to have an international body like the League of Nations to settle effectively all the disputes between different countries?

alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4: 4). Christ teaches emphatically that the love of money is a dangerous thing and that he who builds all his hopes on economic foundations is foolish. Whoever wants to be a disciple of Christ must be prepared to give up his possessions.

Translated into modern language the Christian nations must cease exploiting weak and backward races for the sake of economic gain. All races and nations of the world must be given opportunities for the fullest and richest development of their inherent possibilities. The governments of the world today are run on the principle that strong and powerful nations must have colonies which contribute to their comfort. The welfare of the colonies and the happiness of the people in them are not the primary ends kept in view, but rather the prosperity of the powerful nations which own the colonies. As long as governments are run on this principle, backward races will suffer. They will have to toil hard, but the fruits of their labour will be enjoyed not by themselves but by the stronger races which rule over them. The Christian Church is seeking to exert its influence on the course of politics, but so far this influence has not been able to achieve much. It is the duty of the Christian youth of today to shoulder the responsibility of urging the Christian nations of the world to carry out in their relations with other races the principles of Christ's teaching. The impact of the Christian Church on the course of world-politics must be made real and effective. The Christian rulers of the world must be urged to observe in their dealings with other countries the lofty teachings of

showed mercy to a needy person was that person's neighbour. A priest and a Levite passed by the wounded man and did not help him. Their religion was primarily concerned with ritual and doctrine and not with service for the sick and needy. But a Samaritan took excellent care of the wounded man and treated him as his own neighbour. The Samaritans were held in great contempt by the Jews. There seem to have been religious and social animosities between the Samaritans and the Jews. The Jews would not even pass through their country on their journey. With his characteristic breadth of outlook Christ picked out a Samaritan as the hero of His parable, and gave him qualities of heart which His own people did not possess. It was in line with the breadth and universality of Christ's love that He should thus consider, if only in a parable, a member of the despised Samaritan race to be genuinely possessed of the sterling quality of mercy. We also note in this parable a new definition of neighbourliness. A neighbour is not necessarily a man of one's own race or culture or country with whom one has many familiar and intimate contacts. A neighbour is one who sees need wherever it is, and at once seeks to meet it. This new conception of neighbourliness ought to be made real in the world today. We often regard as our neighbours only our own countrymen who belong to the same racial stock, speak the same language and practise the same customs as ourselves. We are prepared to make an effort to understand their needs and to help them. But when it comes to dealing with men of other races and cultures we hesitate. Often the desire to preserve racial purity stands in the way of free social inter-

subject of self-sacrifice and death as a means of deeper and more real life (John 12: 20-36). Thus we have Jesus coming in contact with representatives of three different races. The Roman with his pomp and power and his prestige as the ruler of the country came into contact with Him on more than one occasion, and was at once impressed by His great personality. The Greek, proud of his philosophy and culture, sought to understand more clearly the meaning of life, and Jesus helped him in this great purpose. The Samaritan had not the prestige and position of either the Roman or the Greek, but was held in contempt by his Jewish neighbours. Jesus with his usual breadth and liberality treated a member of this despised race with the same love, and extended to her His spiritual gifts with the same lavish hand. Thus though His contacts with men and women of other races were rather limited, as was inevitable in those far-off days when opportunities for travel were not as abundant as today, yet in the few instances in which He met members of other races He showed a magnanimity and love which those who profess to follow Him have been far too slow to make their own. A great many of our problems in our chaotic world today would be solved if, in the relationships among men of different races, the wonderful spirit of love which was in the heart of Jesus and which flowed out to all without any regard to their race, culture or language, could only prevail in the world. At present the world seems to be an armed camp. Strong and powerful nations are daily making themselves more powerful in order to bring under their domination other peoples who are not so strong. Applied science, instead of making the world

#### 4. CHRIST AND FREEDOM

The ideal of freedom appeals greatly to youth. In India today the call of freedom has laid its spell with special potency on all thoughtful and idealistic youth. The struggle for freedom in the country evokes a noble response from all those who have any spark of longing for higher and deeper things. The talk of freedom kindles thought and activity as nothing else does. For the sake of attaining freedom thousands of young men and women are ready to go to prison, yea, to sacrifice their very lives.

Freedom generally means political freedom. Christ was aware of the need for political freedom. His own nation was a subject nation. The Jews were oppressed and exploited by the Romans. There was in Christ's time a strong party (the Zealots) working for political freedom. A member of this party was one of Christ's disciples. It is quite likely that Jesus knew all the implications of the struggle for political freedom. Many of his enthusiastic countrymen fondly hoped that He would lead the struggle. When, however, the question was raised as to whether taxes should be paid to the hated foreign Roman government, he simply said, 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's' (Matt. 22: 15-22). Though an isolated verse, this indicates clearly that Jesus did not identify Himself with the struggle for

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 breadth of scientific and philosophic knowledge, what is meant is that he will reach a true insight into reality which is so essential for all moral and spiritual progress. A man cannot be said to be free if he is bound at all points by superstition, and prejudice and misconception. He must know the real duty of man and how it must be performed: Unless he has this clear conception he is a slave to wrong ideas and beliefs. The follower of Christ who fully believes in Him reaches that spiritual insight which is the first step on the path of progress. 26563 A64C

3. The disciple of Christ must be ready to take up the Cross (Mark 8: 34-38). The acceptance of Christ's teaching and the practice of it in the individual and social spheres will involve much suffering. For this the disciple of Christ must be quite prepared. Every sincere Christian must speak the absolute truth. This will involve at times considerable trouble. Friends will urge him to give up his rigid adherence to truth. They will seek to persuade him by all sorts of specious arguments. If he will only hide the exact truth he will have a soft and comfortable time. But Jesus demands nothing less than absolute truth, whatever suffering it may cost. The disciple of Christ must be prepared to practise absolute love in his dealings with others. If war breaks out and he declares for pacificism, he may have to go to prison. But if he is a genuine follower of Christ he must be ready to suffer to the utmost. For through death life comes (John 12: 24, 25). 'A grain of wheat does not sprout into new life unless it first decays and dies. There cannot be a real emergence of the spiritual life unless



best men should be chosen by the popular vote and entrusted with various responsibilities. But if the citizens are swayed by pride, jealousy or ambition, they will not choose the best men. Aggressive and self-seeking men will be elected by their friends pushing them up for various personal reasons, and when power comes into their hands they will not administer the affairs of the country in the best possible way. They will be interested in keeping the power in their hands as long as possible and in increasing it in every way. The pursuit of these ends, rather than the attainment of the best possible goal for the people, will be the major purpose of such leaders. Slaves to their own personal ambitions and jealousies, they will frustrate all real freedom in the country. If, on the other hand, they have attained Swaraj over their own souls and are purged of all unworthy motives, they will be in a position to carry on most efficiently the administration of their country.

The Oxford Group Movement did wisely when some time ago they sent a party of workers to Geneva to influence the political leaders assembled there. The League of Nations stands for a high ideal, but it has not been able to achieve much in the sphere of international relationships because the representatives of the great powers who only can influence the course of world-politics have been essentially selfish. Each great power has sought to keep what colonies it has, and has not been willing in the interests of world-peace to risk anything. When the time for decisive action came and sanctions had to be applied against Italy for her aggression in Abyssinia, the Great Powers that

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## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did not Christ lead a political movement for the emancipation of the Jews from Roman rule as many expected Him to do?

2. Can we say that devotion to Christ and His teaching was responsible for the movements which abolished slavery in different parts of the world?

3. Does public morality necessarily depend on private morality? Why should not selfish people make good rulers?

4. Is the movement for political Swaraj in India hampered by incompleteness in personal Swaraj? What can we do to remedy this deficiency?

5. Can there be real personal Swaraj among a people who are politically enslaved? Or will there be too much slave mentality?

6. Will it ever be possible to have moral and spiritual activities of unselfishness and love widely spread, or is this all an empty dream? Is the human race becoming more selfish or less selfish in the course of the centuries?

the talents already entrusted. While the main reference in the parable is to intellectual and spiritual gifts, it can be reasonably suggested that here Jesus commends the man who multiplies his wealth by care and effort.

Money rewards are not always proportionate to the work done. This is clear from the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20: 1-16). We are often tempted to compute work in terms of money. So much work, so much money. This creates false standards. Work for which money is not paid is either shirked or shabbily done. This parable teaches clearly that purely economic measurement of work is false. Men who labour all day and bear the heat and burden of the day are paid as much as those who begin work in the later hours of the day. It is a man's job to do his work well and thoroughly. The rewards are often beyond his control. While everything must be done in a rightly ordered society to see that the economic compensation for work is just, the worker, whether manual or intellectual, must be primarily interested in the quality and quantity of his work rather than in its monetary rewards.

These two parables, however, do not mean that the present economic arrangements are ordained of God and should remain as they are. An excellent parish priest I knew taught the children in his church every Sunday to sing:

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them, high or lowly,  
And order'd their estate.

and practised the differences between the rich and the poor will largely disappear, all having more or less the same opportunities for education, for work, for leisure and for enjoyment. The rich would share what they have with the poor.

Jesus calls for a spirit of detachment both from the poor and from the rich. The poor are often worried about their financial requirements. The problem of making both ends meet is a constant one with them. They are continually exercised as to how they are going to find the money to pay for the rent of their house, their food, their clothes, their children's education and so forth. To those who are thus worried Jesus speaks of the necessity of detachment (Matt. 6: 24-34). God provides for the necessities even of the animal and vegetable world. Will He not provide for the needs of men and women? Continuous worry and care about the material things of life is not necessary. Our loving Father is able to provide for our needs. Are there not many poor people quite happy and contented because they fully believe in a good God who provides for their needs?

The spirit of detachment is necessary for the rich as well as for the poor. The parable of the rich fool (Luke 12: 13-21) shows the folly of attaching too much importance to wealth. There is no evidence that this man got his money by exploiting the poor. His one fault was that he pinned his whole faith to material goods. The necessity for detachment is often taught in India. Tagore tells the story of a disciple who brought a pair of gold bangles set with costly stones to the Sikh teacher, Govinda. The teacher took up

2. Is there any room for capitalists in the Kingdom of God?

3. What is Jesus' teaching about class-war?

4. What would be the attitude of Jesus towards the state ownership of various industries such as railways and mines?

5. How would Jesus consider measures such as the Sales Tax and the Agriculturists' Relief Act by which the differences between the rich and the poor are sought to be minimised by legislation?

6. Kagawa, the Japanese saint, speaks of the co-operative method as an effective means of bringing in the Kingdom of God. Is this true?

we cannot but admit that there is a large measure of truth in their contention that thoughts and ideas of sex do terribly corrupt the character. There should be no secret indulgence in exciting sex imagery, in reading trashy novels in which the sex motive runs riot, in studying obscene pictures or in talking constantly on sex themes. Modern education methods have laid stress on imparting information on sex to the young in a clean and scientific spirit. This is quite necessary. Men and women do need a knowledge of subjects connected with sex, but often this knowledge has been imparted in ways of doubtful value. A morbid curiosity about sex is often roused by, on the one hand, familiarity with books and pictures which seem to excite sex interest; and by, on the other hand, a refusal on the part of parents and teachers to give in a legitimate and pure way such scientific information as the young need. Fortunately there are books now which seek to impart such information, and they could be read and a certain amount of scientific knowledge on the subject obtained. While this is quite legitimate and necessary, all familiarity with books and films whose only attraction is sex should be avoided. For as Christ has taught so clearly, evil thoughts corrupt character and are as harmful as evil deeds. This caution is particularly necessary in these days when trashy novels and films, which make a living by stimulating some of the baser passions of men, are so abundant.

Jesus teaches us clearly the sacredness of marriage (Matt. 5: 31, 32; Mark 10: 2-12). A permanent monogamous relationship has been the Christian ideal

other. No hasty impulsive marriages should be made, and certainly modern men and women, with their greater education and greater sense of responsibility and more abundant opportunities for knowing each other, are extremely favourably placed in this matter. Where marriages are contracted hastily or by immature persons, or on the pressure of well-meaning parents when the couple do not know each other, such mishaps may be frequent. But things are moving rapidly in the direction where a young man and a young woman find it possible to have a fairly intimate knowledge of each other before they get married. Having married with this knowledge, they should be completely faithful to each other for the rest of their lives. If they have any doubt or hesitation on the point they should not enter into the sacred bonds of marriage. Having once married after a full and clear knowledge of each other, they should continue permanently their marriage relationship.

In India the problems are rather different. Only in certain circles, such as those of Anglo-Indians or of Indian Christians who follow mostly Western modes of life, the difficulties may be the same as in Christian countries. In Indian homes still crude customs prevail with regard to marriage. Young people are married off when young at the instance of their parents and they are not given any opportunity to know each other. Dowries are arranged and the bride and bridegroom are selected not on the basis of their fitness for each other but of the amount of the dowry which is given. Such undesirable customs often lead to unhappy marriages. If we insist on the standard of

a wholly different outlook. They meet men not merely on social occasions, when free from the worries and cares of work they seek to make themselves agreeable to men, but they meet them in the office, in the school and college, on the platform and in social service centres where the main thought is not entertainment but work and service. Both men and women get absorbed in the common work of making life a little better, a little more comfortable, a little more happy for others. Such concern for others and such joint work as men and women undertake to-day have done a great deal to modify the rigour and difficulty of the sex problem. As long as women are kept in seclusion, are artificially protected and are brought up with the idea that their primary function in life is to marry, they become self-centred and devote all their valuable time to making themselves merely attractive. Men also who share this outlook, when they meet women, merely think of them as possible marriage partners and as nothing else. Our old ideas about the upbringing and work of girls are mainly responsible for some of the sex difficulties. It is good that, with the new awakening in the country, women are given freedom and opportunity to reconstruct human society on a more satisfactory basis than now in co-operation with men.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do modern films and novels occupied too much with sex? Could you mention novels and films which are wholesome?



## 7. CHRIST AND SUFFERING

In recent years we have been hearing a great deal about the problem of suffering. The problem, of course, is as old as humanity. In the Bible, a whole book, the Book of Job, is devoted to a consideration of this problem. While the problem of suffering has exercised the mind of man always, at the present time it has assumed a new importance. The Great War, in which millions of lives were lost, gave a new significance to the problem. The complications and difficulties of the post-war world have concentrated still more men's minds on this problem.

The Jew explained all man's suffering as due to sin (Luke 13: 1-5). In this passage Jesus sets forth the common Jewish belief that suffering is due to sin, and repudiates it with His characteristic vigour. The Hindu explains all suffering as due to deeds done in former births. According to Hindu belief, a man suffers in this life because in his former births he was guilty of grievous offences.

The continued effort of man for centuries to think out a solution of this problem has resulted in distinguishing various causes of suffering, in pointing out which of these causes are avoidable and which unavoidable, and in suggesting different methods by which some suffering may well be prevented.

Sometimes physical causes like earthquakes, famines, and epidemics are responsible for suffering on

deeds do not seem to follow them. We do not know all the facts about such people. Hidden from the eyes of men there may be much suffering even among them. Nations likewise which exploit weaker countries and violate many of the moral laws accepted by men seem to flourish, often for centuries together. But looking at the history of mankind as a whole, we see that such individuals and nations sooner or later come to grief as a result of their violation of accepted moral laws. Suffering due to moral causes constitutes no problem. The conscience of man all over the world accepts that it is but right and proper that the infringement of moral laws should be followed by painful results. These painful results may persuade at least some men to observe moral laws.

Some of the suffering which men undergo is due to social causes. It is being increasingly recognized to-day that much of the disparity between the rich and the poor, and the hardship and suffering which the poor undergo, is due to a wrong ordering of Society. The well-to-do have so arranged the social structure that they have a happy and comfortable existence, whereas the poor spend their lives in misery and wretchedness. It is characteristic of the present age that it sees so clearly that the real cause at work in producing the present social fabric, with its grave injustices, is human selfishness. The present age is also characteristically and courageously experimenting in various forms of Communism and Socialism to do away with the glaring inequalities of the social order with their consequent suffering.

Some of the suffering of men is due to political

should not have been differently placed and some at least of the suffering averted.

The Christian solution of the problem of suffering is that man is thereby trained and disciplined. The ninth chapter of the Gospel of St. John tells the story of the healing of the man born blind, and records the teaching of Jesus on the meaning of suffering. The Jews assume that either the blind man himself or his parents had sinned (See verses 2 & 34). Whatever the physical or other cause which had caused his blindness, the point was to give physical relief to the blind man himself and to make a better man of him. This Christ proceeded to do. He gave him complete relief. But this relief was only possible because of whole-hearted obedience (verses 6 & 7). Christ made His gift of sight depend on a rather strange condition, namely, washing in the pool of Siloam. The gift of physical sight led to a wonderfully clear spiritual perception. The man healed felt convinced that the one who had wrought this great change in him was a man of God. His conviction on this point was quite unshakable (verses 24 to 34). The Pharisees bullied him by such methods as they knew. They did not in the first place even believe that he had received his sight. They called in question the very fact of the change which had been wrought in him (verse 18). They tried to influence his parents by either an open or veiled threat of ex-communication. The parents, afraid of the power which the Pharisees had, refused to commit themselves to any statement of what had happened. It is likely that the blind man knew, like his parents, the power which the Pharisees had to cu

4. Is it true that nations as well as individuals following evil ways inevitably come to grief?

5. If the above is true, is it a reasonable fact?

6. A man wrecks his body by a dissolute life ; if he repents and is forgiven, does he regain his normal physical powers or does he continue to suffer?

the idea that the Jews were a race specially called of God to a high destiny (Matt. 15: 21-28). When a woman, who was a Gentile, besought Him to heal her daughter. He told her that it was not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. When she humbly replied that the dogs ate of the crumbs which fell from the master's table, He was greatly pleased with her faith and healed her daughter. It is difficult to understand why Christ, who was always so loving and compassionate and who was ever ready to help the sick and the suffering, took up this attitude towards one who belonged to another faith and who needed His help. One thing at least is clear, that He attached a special importance to the Jews and concentrated His main energies on winning them over. His saying, Salvation is of the Jews, points in the same direction (John 4: 22). He believed with His countrymen that God had chosen the Jews and had trained them for a high vocation, and that it was through the Jews that His own message was to reach the world. Slowly in the course of the centuries the Jews had learnt that there is one God and that He should be worshipped with a pure and clean life. Hebrew law-givers, psalmists and prophets had instilled these profound convictions gradually and with much difficulty into the Hebrew mind. And the Jew had come to profess a monotheistic faith of a lofty type. On the foundation of this faith Christ was to build His own structure. He led the Jews first, and through them other nations in the world, to believe that this one God is a God of infinite love who redeems men by identifying Himself with their human life and suffering. God comes down

ready to acknowledge faith and spiritual insight even in others than the Jews (Luke 7: 1-10 ; Matt. 8: 5-13). The centurion of whom we read in these verses was an interesting character. He was a Gentile who had been attracted by the monotheism of the Jews and had generously built a synagogue for them. He was a kindly disposed man, as we can see from the deep personal interest which he took in his servant who was ill. In spite of his official position and the authority which he exercised, he was very humble and fully believed that Jesus could heal the servant even without coming into the house. As an officer of the army he was used to enforcing discipline, and we may surmise that in his own personal life he insisted upon some of the discipline which he enforced on others. Jesus marvelled at this man's faith and gave utterance to that profound saying, 'Many shall come from the East and the West and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness'. It is significant that Jesus thus recognized real spiritual goodness and power in one who did not belong to His own faith. We do not even know whether He pressed him to become His follower or whether He let him continue in his own religion. On this point we have no evidence either the one way or the other in the Gospels. But we do know that Jesus was impressed by the intense faith of the man, and expressed publicly His conviction that there were many others like him who shall have a place in the Kingdom of Heaven while the children of the Kingdom themselves shall be cast out.

gious. We are only concerned here with the religious aspect of this controversy.

The controversy related to the place of worship, the Jews claiming the Temple in Jerusalem as the supreme place of worship and the Samaritans claiming their own Temple on Mount Gerizim as even more important. This controversy is referred to Him for His judgment by the Samaritan woman. Jesus at once lifts the controversy to a high level by teaching that God should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. He teaches here by implication that in comparison with such genuine worship, controversies about particular places of worship are of no great significance. What really counts is the true worship of God, not as to whether it is conducted in a special temple. We know how Jesus loved the Temple in Jerusalem. He was often found worshipping in it and teaching within its precincts. He described it familiarly as His Father's house. When people desecrated it by buying and selling in it and turning it into a market-place where haggling and cheating took place, he was moved to indignation and drove out all those who thus spoilt its holiness. He was really attached to the Temple and used it constantly as a place of worship. In spite of this attachment He was ready to lay down the great truth that God is essentially a Spirit, and that worship of Him should be fundamentally true and spiritual. Much bitterness and wrangling has been caused in this world, and often streams of blood have been shed, over controversies about churches, temples and mosques. The lofty character of the teaching of Jesus, that in worship we should first and foremost

3. Is the communist's claim that religion has always been on the side of vested interests true?

4. How far have political motives been responsible for keeping men of different religions in different communities?

5. Are all human beings fundamentally alike (in their good as well as bad qualities), whatever religion they may follow?

6. Is the missionary movement in the Christian Church losing its strength? If so, why?

7. Is the task of making the present Christian Church truly Christian more urgent than missionary work?



of the art of prayer. Jesus could teach us a great deal about how to pray, if only we would come to Him and sit at His feet.

For all effective prayer unwavering faith is quite necessary (Mark 11: 22-24). There is much lack of faith to-day. For one reason, the spread of science has made it difficult for men to have faith. Astronomers are telling us that there are innumerable suns with worlds revolving around them, and that in such a vast universe, the magnitude of which we can scarcely realise, our own earth is but a small part. To suppose that the whole universe is being run for the benefit of men, living on this tiny globe, is considered sheer folly. Jesus, however, fully believed in a good God who, in spite of His many activities, is interested in each one of us. He cares even for the birds and the flowers, and certainly cares much more for men and women. The power of God is released by prayer for each man and woman. To give a simple illustration: Not long ago many of our towns and cities were badly lit. Dim lights flickered in the streets, and people strained their eyes in their homes to read with oil lamps which threw but a feeble glimmer. Now that electricity is supplied to our towns the roads are ablaze with light and homes are brilliantly illumined. Contact with electricity has made all this difference. Contact with God will make all the difference in the world to people. Those who fully believe in God, and who seek by prayer access to His power, will find themselves greatly strengthened and helped. Complete, unwavering, absolute trust in the goodness of God and in His power is essential to prayer.

to surrender herself entirely to God's will. This she did and obtained immediately a new peace of mind. When the Bishop prayed that her illness might be healed the prayer was heard. Her surrender to God's will proved to be the turning point in her life. After it, she had wonderful peace and complete health. The hymn in which Newman wholly surrenders himself to God, and asks but for the next step to be shown to him, is deeply moving.

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on ;  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on.  
Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene ; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou  
Shouldst lead me on ;  
I loved to choose and see my path ; but now  
Lead Thou me on.  
I loved the garnish day, and, spite of fears,  
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

It may be asked whether it is possible to persist in prayer and at the same time to yield ourselves completely to God's will. The Quietists maintained that there should be no effort but only a whole-hearted surrender, and that effort and surrender are quite incompatible. In His own experience Jesus shows that the two can well go together. In the garden of Gethsamene (Matt. 26: 36-46), He is most persistent in prayer, and at the same time yields himself entirely into God's hands. Apparently He was engaged in prayer for quite a long time, for even His intimate

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is there room for prayer in a universe like ours governed by law?
2. Is prayer a subjective process, or does it have its value from the fact that it reaches an Objective Reality?
3. Are answered prayers and unanswered prayers wholly matters of chance?
4. Is there time for prayer in our modern age of hurry and business?
5. Have mystical experiences in prayer any great value?
6. Is it possible to change God's will for us by persistent prayers? What does Jesus teach on this point?

but he felt restless and had a breakdown in health. He had to go to America for a year's furlough, and even after his return he had the same trouble. His collapses continued, and he went twice to the hills in search of health. After a second stay on the hills, he still felt bad, and it looked as if he would have to return to America and settle down on a farm where the fresh air and the hard toil would have built up his health. At Lucknow he heard a Voice which said 'Are you yourself ready for this work to which I have called you?' Stanley Jones said, 'No, Lord, I am done for. I have reached the end of my rope.' The Voice said, 'If you will turn that over to me and not worry about it, I will take care of it.' Stanley Jones said quickly, 'Lord, I close the bargain right here,' and a new life took possession of him from that day. He has since then got through an enormous amount of work the world over without a breakdown.

Our Lord gives us a new lease of mental life. A friend once said that before surrendering himself to Christ he used to take four hours to complete a certain task, but that after his surrender he was able to complete it in two hours. Before his surrender, he was probably subject to many distractions. He did not put his whole heart into his work. There was no one to control him and he took his own time. He thought that his employers could not grumble; was he not doing his money's worth? He allowed his mind to dwell on other interests, a cinema show he was going to see, a call he intended to make, a new suit of clothes he expected to order. But after his surrender to Christ, a new concentration was possible for him.

ing us a God who is full of love for us and who forgives us all our sins. When we see Christ, we see God (John 14: 1-14). We see the love of God mirrored for us in the wonderful teaching of Jesus, and still more in His wonderful life and death. We see Jesus healing the sick, forgiving the penitent and helping the sinner, and we believe that God does the same with us. We see Jesus tread the way of the Cross, and His agony and pain reveal the agony and pain of the Father over the sins of the world. God is eager to put away our sins and to give us a new chance. The memory of our past misdeeds need not block the threshold of our spiritual life in any way.

Men and women transformed by the power of Christ will bring in a new world. We often think in these days in large terms and speak of world-problems, and rightly so. But world-problems are solved by consecrated men, who convince themselves and others of the need and effectiveness of the Christ-way. If the youth of today surrender themselves fully to Christ, they will see a new vision of the world and will also be given the power to make this vision a reality.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Are the ideals of Christ realisable in life? After twenty centuries of Christian experience are we really any better than those who do not regard themselves as Christians?

2. Is membership in the Church necessary in order to follow Christ truly? Can we distinguish between loyalty to Christ and loyalty to Church?

